

Cryptosporidiosis (Crypto) Information Sheet

What is Cryptosporidiosis?

Cryptosporidiosis, called Crypto, is an illness that causes watery diarrhea. It is caused by the parasite, *Cryptosporidium*, which is found in water, food, soil, and on any surface contaminated with the feces (poop) of infected people or animals. Crypto is the most common type of illness that people get from water in the U.S.

How can you catch Cryptosporidiosis?

You can catch Crypto when the parasite gets into your mouth. Common ways include:

- Swallowing water that people are swimming or bathing in
- Drinking untreated water from a lake or stream
- Eating or drinking unpasteurized foods such as cheese, milk, or cider
- Touching your mouth after touching things contaminated with feces of an infected person/animal.

People most at risk of Crypto include those attending/working in childcare, swimmers, people working with farm animals, hikers/campers, people caring for others with crypto, and people exposed to human feces through sexual contact. The elderly, pregnant women, young children, and people with weak immune systems are more likely to get a serious illness if they get infected.

What are the symptoms of Cryptosporidiosis?

Symptoms start 3-14 days after exposure (commonly 7 days). Symptoms include: **watery diarrhea**, stomach cramps /pain, nausea, vomiting, dehydration, weight loss, and fever.

IMPORTANT: People with this infection should not work as food handlers, healthcare providers or childcare workers until symptoms have stopped! Children with this infection should not attend childcare until symptoms have stopped!

How can you be treated for Cryptosporidiosis?

Most people with healthy immune systems recover without treatment in 1-2 weeks. There is medication that can be used for healthy individuals who are having trouble recovering. Dehydration from diarrhea can be avoided by drinking plenty of fluids. Talk to your healthcare provider before taking any over-the-counter medications for Crypto infection. People with serious illness due to weakened immune systems may not be able to get rid of the parasite and may have serious infections.

How can you prevent Cryptosporidiosis?

- Do not swallow water when swimming or bathing (Note: Crypto is not killed by chlorine; it can be found in pools and hot tubs that are adequately treated).
- Do not swim with diarrhea and avoid swimming for 2 weeks after diarrhea stops.
- Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water: after using the bathroom/changing diapers, before consuming any food or beverages, before and after caring for someone who is ill with diarrhea, after gardening (even if wearing gloves), and after handling any animal or its feces.